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Beastly Poetry

By
Ogden Nash





Hi! Hope you have
some amusing times
As you read through
these zany rhymes!



Tell me, O Octopus, I begs,
Is those things arms, or is they legs?
I marvel at thee, Octopus;
If I were thou, I'd call me Us.

Myself, I rather like the bat,
It's not a mouse, it's not a rat.
It has no feathers, yet has wings,
It's quite inaudible when it sings.
It zigzags through the evening air
And never lands on ladies' hair,
A fact of which men spend their lives
Attempting to convince their wives.

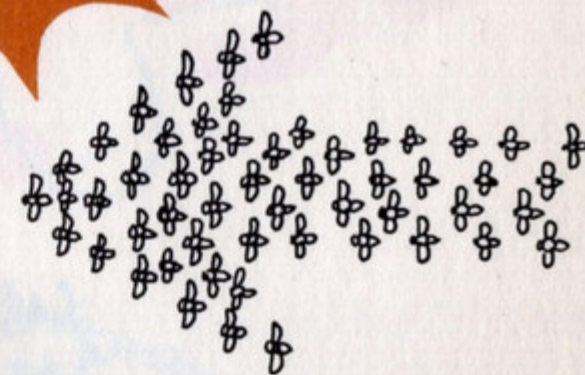
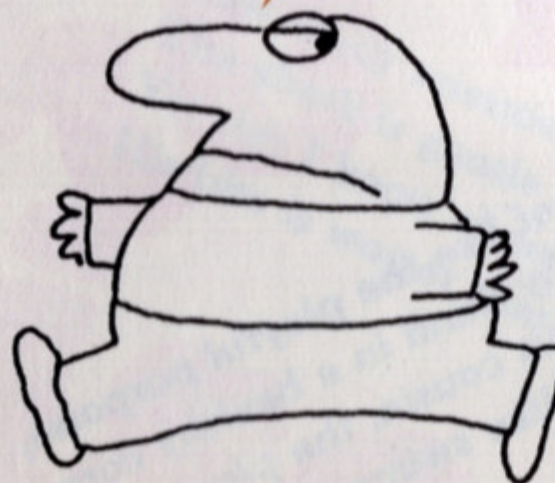


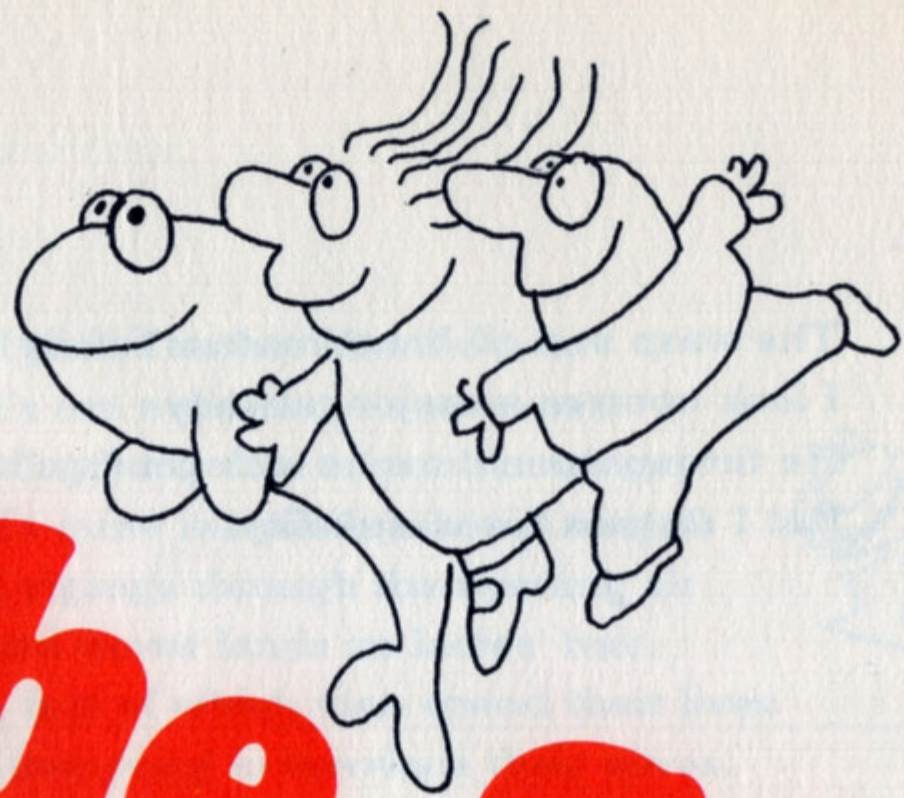
Bat



The wasp and all his numerous family
I look upon as a major calamity.
He throws open his nest with prodigality,
But I distrust his waspitality.

Wasp





The Shark The Porpoise

I kind of like the playful porpoise,
A healthy mind in a healthy corpus.
He and his cousin, the playful dolphin,
Why they like swimmin like I like golphin.



How many scientists have written
The shark is gentle as a kitten!
Yet this I know about the shark:
His bite is worser than his bark.

The

hinoceros



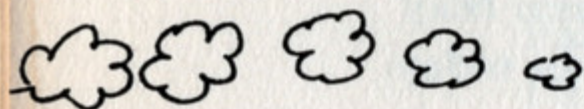
The rhino is a homely beast,
For human eyes he's not a feast.
Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros.



Some primal termite knocked on wood
And tasted it, and found it good,
And that is why your Cousin May
Fell through the parlor floor today.

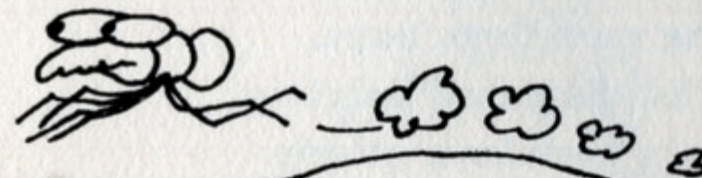
The Chipmunk

My friends all know that I am shy,
But the chipmunk is twice as shy as I.
He moves with flickering indecision
Like stripes across the television.
He's like the shadow of a cloud,
Or Emily Dickinson read aloud.
Yet his ultimate purpose is obvious, very:
To get back to his chipmonastery.



The Ant

The ant has made himself illustrious
Through constant industry industrious.
So what?
Would you be calm and placid
If you were full of formic acid?

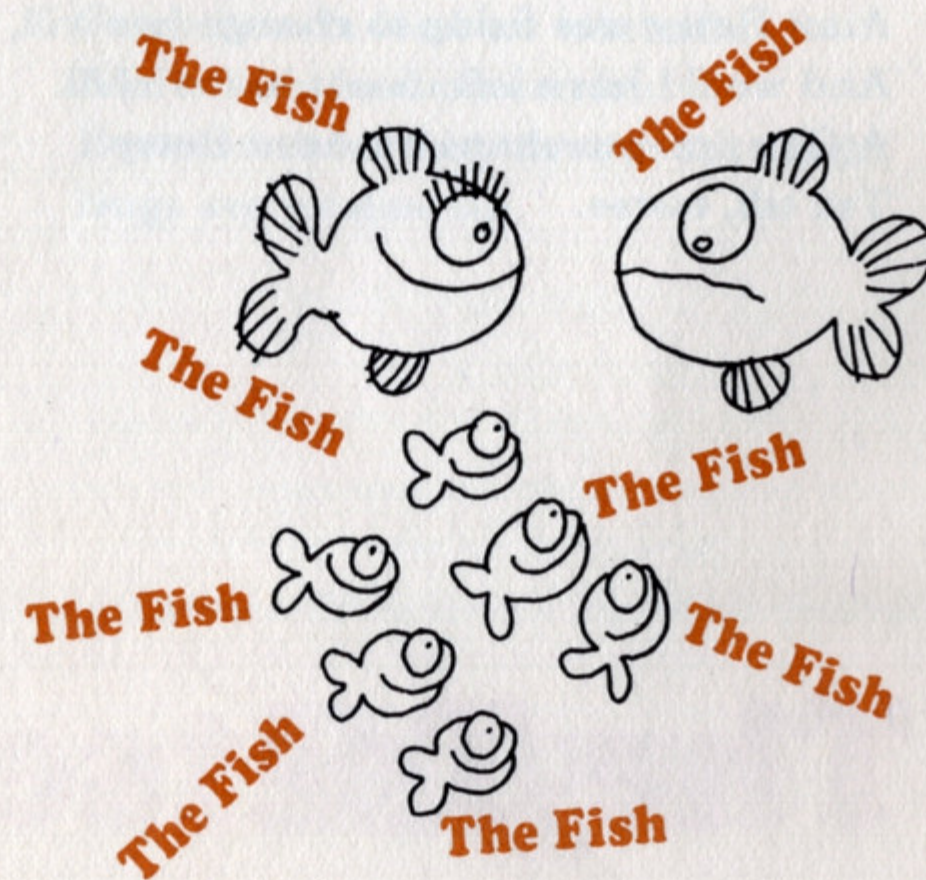


The Shad



I'm sure that Europe never had
A fish as tasty as the shad.
Some people greet the shad with groans,
Complaining of its countless bones;
I claim the bones teach table poise
And separate the men from boys.
The shad must be dissected subtle-y;
Besides, the roe is boneless, utterly.

The fish, when he's exposed to air,
Displays no trace of savoir-faire,
But in the sea regains his balance
And exploits all his manly talents.
The chastest of the vertebrates,
He never even sees his mates,
But when they've finished, he appears
And O.K.'s all their bright ideas.





Aunt Betsy was fixing to change her will,
And would have left us out in the chill.
A Glossina morsitans bit Aunt Betsy.
Tsk tsk, tsetse.

The Tsetse

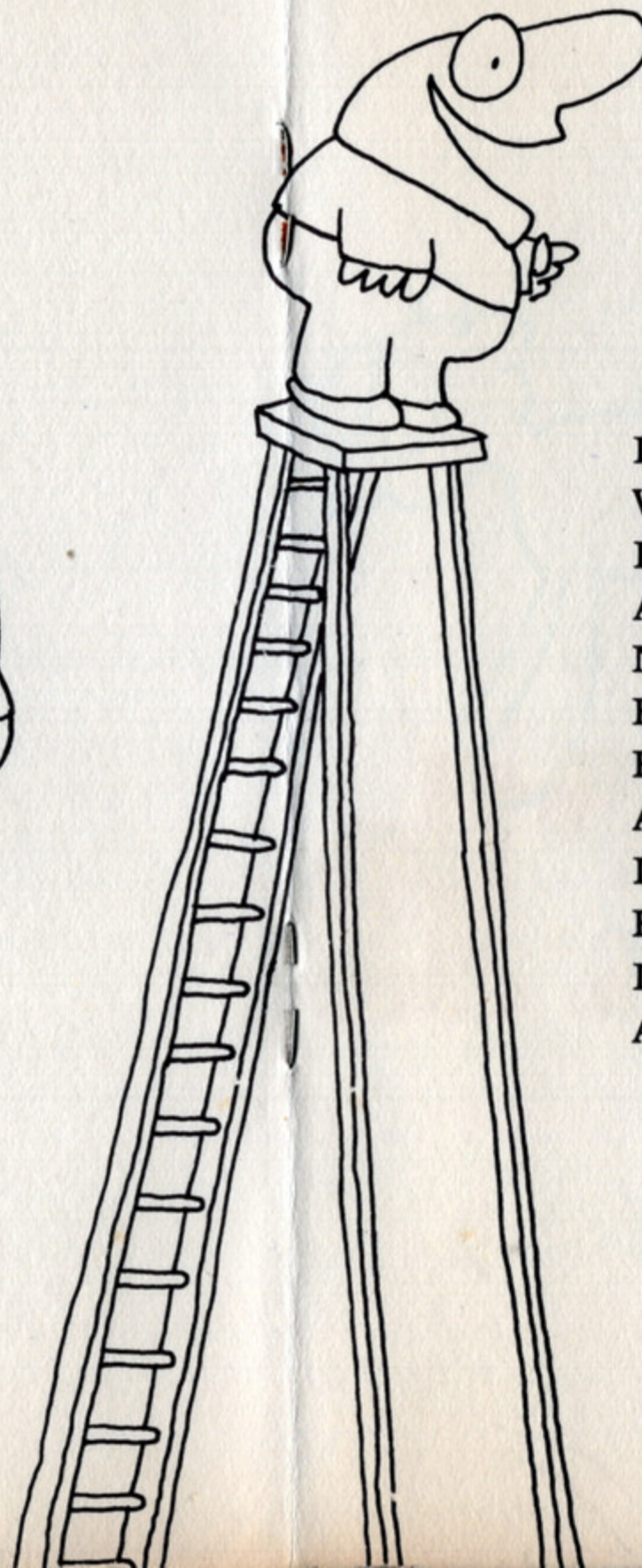


Some insects feed on rosebuds,
And others feed on carrion.
Between them they devour the earth.
Bugs are totalitarian.

Bugs

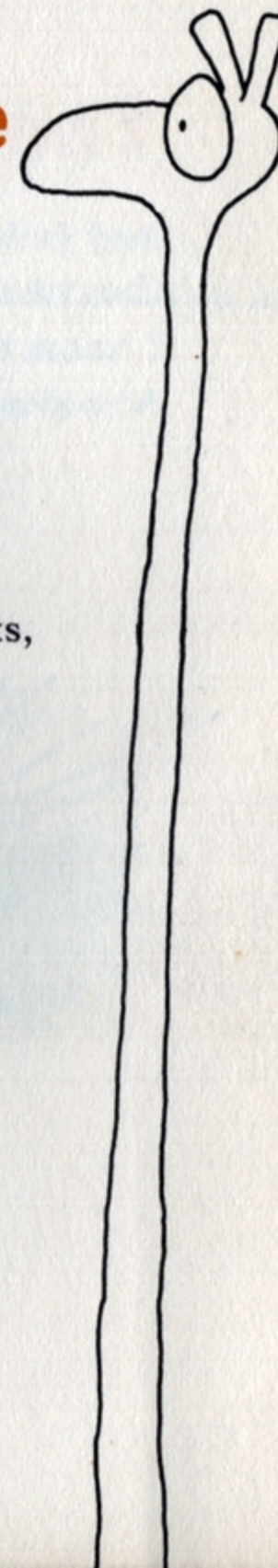
The Caterpillar

I find among the poems of Schiller
No mention of the caterpillar,
Nor can I find one anywhere
In Petrarch or in Baudelaire,
So here I sit in extra session
To give my personal impression.
The caterpillar, as it's called,
Is often hairy, seldom bald;
It looks as if it never shaves;
When as it walks, it walks in waves;
And from the cradle to the chrysalis
It's utterly speechless, songless, whistleless.



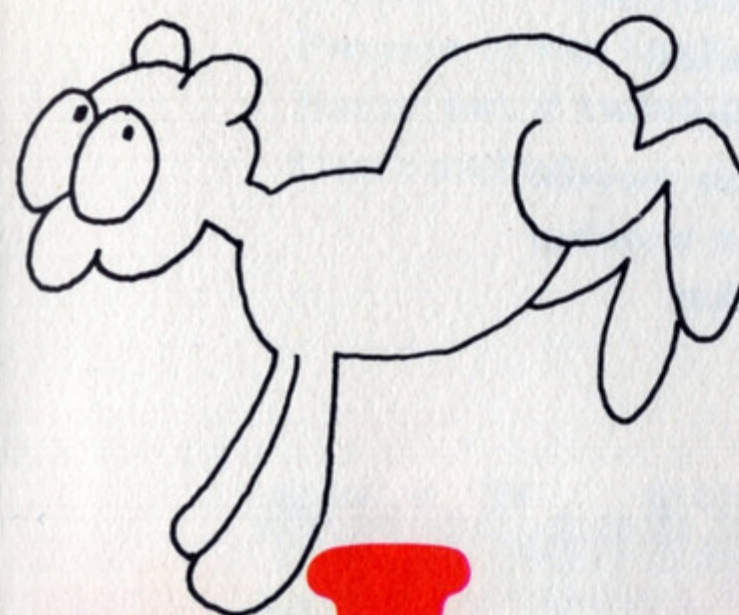
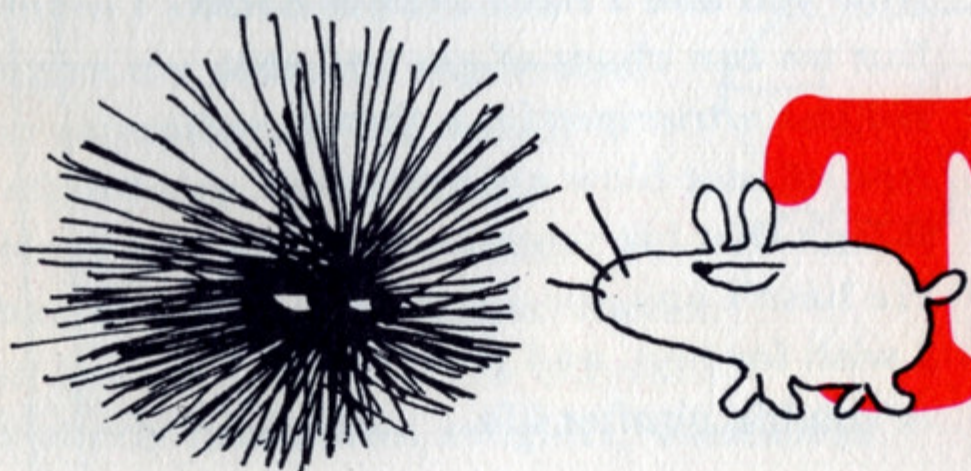
The Giraffe

I beg you, children, do not laugh
When you survey the tall giraffe.
It's hardly sporting to attack
A beast that cannot answer back.
Now you and I have shorter necks,
But we can chant of gin and sex;
He has a trumpet for a throat,
And cannot blow a single note.
It isn't that his voice he hoards;
He hasn't any vocal cords.
I wish for him, and for his wife,
A voluble girafter life.



The Porcupine

Any hound a porcupine nudges
Can't be blamed for harboring grudges.
I know one hound that laughed all winter
At a porcupine that sat on a splinter.



Little gamboling lamb,
Do you know where you am?
In a patch of mint.
I'll give you a hint.
Scram,
Lamb!

The Lamb

The wombat lives across the seas,
Among the far Antipodes.
He may exist on nuts and berries,
Or then again, on missionaries;
His distant habitat precludes
Conclusive knowledge of his moods.
But I would not engage the wombat
In any form of mortal combat.

The Wombat



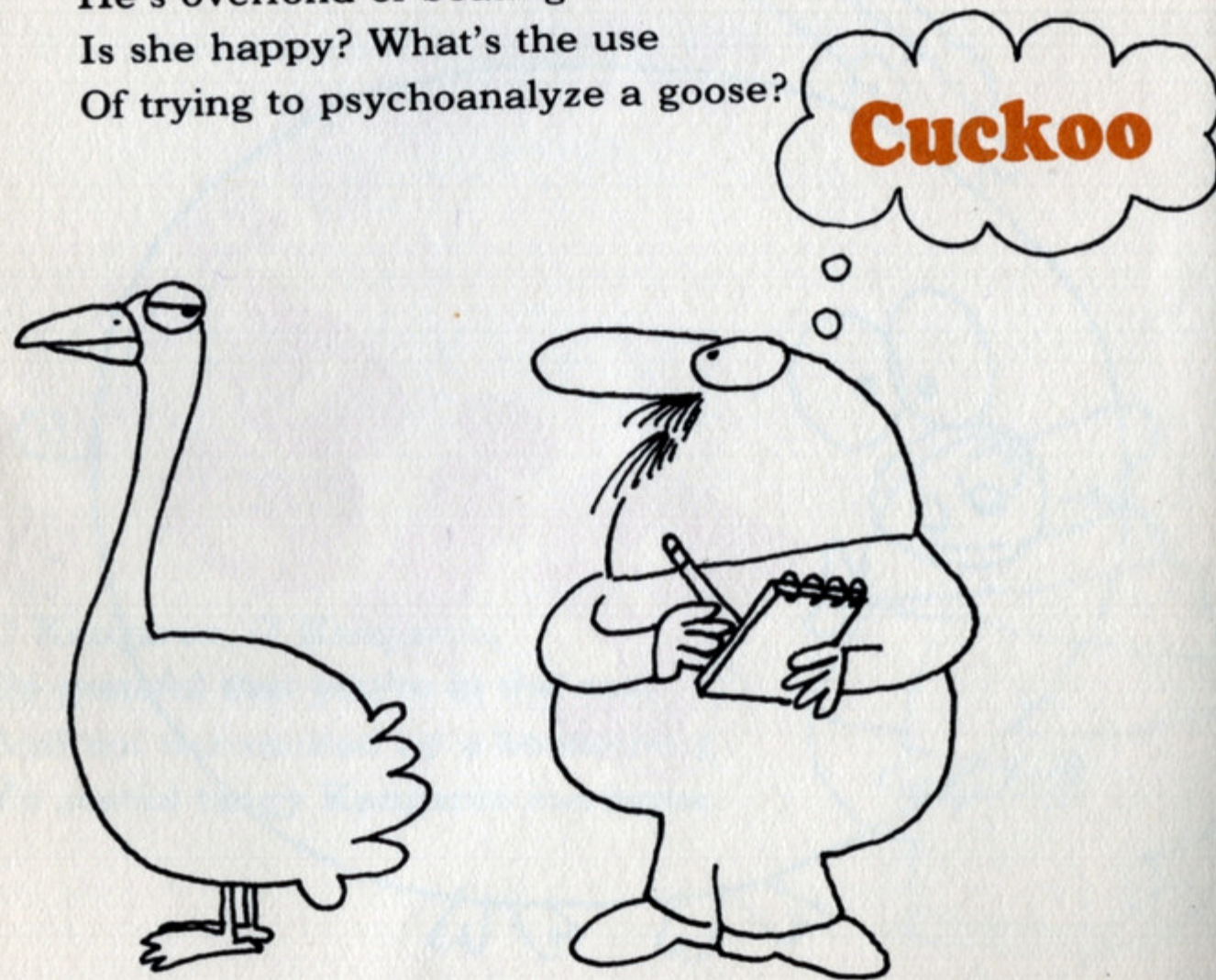
The panther is like a leopard,
Except it hasn't been peppered.
Should you behold a panther crouch,
Prepare to say Ouch.
Better yet, if called by a panther,
Don't anther.

The Panther



The Gander

Be careful not to cross the gander,
A bird composed of beak and dander.
His heart is filled with prideful hate
Of all the world except his mate,
And if the neighbors do not err
He's overfond of beating her.
Is she happy? What's the use
Of trying to psychoanalyze a goose?



Cuckoos lead Bohemian lives,
They fail as husbands and as wives,
Therefore they cynically disparage
Everybody else's marriage.



The Germ



The Camel

The camel has a single hump;
The dromedary, two;
Or else the other way around.
I'm never sure. Are you?



A mighty creature is the germ,
Though smaller than the pachyderm.
His customary dwelling place
Is deep within the human race.
His childish pride he often pleases
By giving people strange diseases.
Do you, my poppet, feel infirm?
You probably contain a germ.

The Guppy

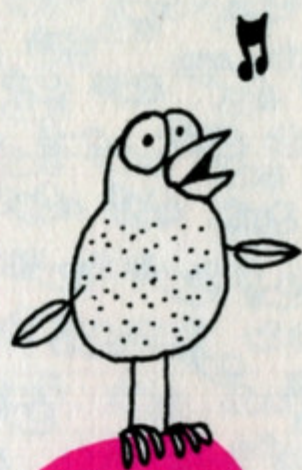
Whales have calves,
Cats have kittens,
Bears have cubs,
Bats have bittens.
Swans have cygnets,
Seals have puppies,
But guppies just have little guppies.

The oyster's a confusing suitor;
It's masc., and fem., and even neuter.
But whether husband, pal or wife
It leads a painless sort of life.
I'd like to be an oyster, say,
In August, June, July or May.



The Oyster

The

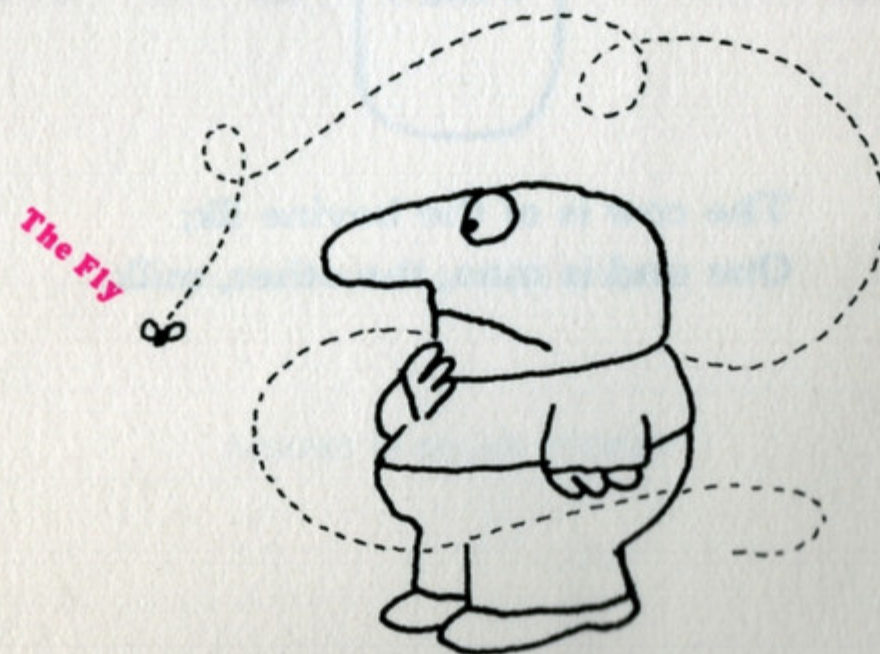


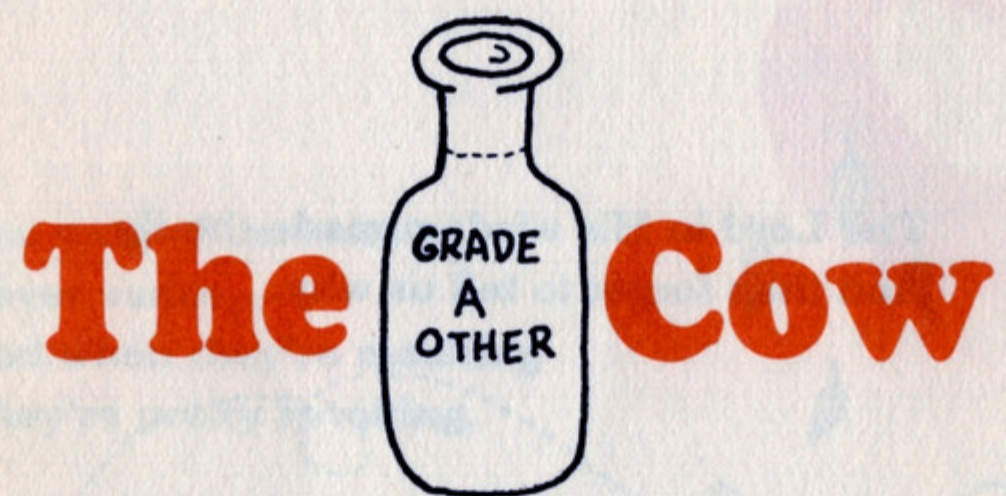
Canary

The song of canaries
Never varies,
And when they're moulting
They're pretty revolting.



The Lord in His wisdom made the fly
And then forgot to tell us why.





The cow is of the bovine ilk;
One end is moo, the other, milk.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES BARSOTTI

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